

DISCLOSURE DIVISION

☒ WAIVER REQUEST
☐ ANSWER
☐ RECONSIDERATION REQUEST
☐ UNTIMELY

DATE: 1/11/2021

DOCKET #: 2021-035

Ashley Wimberley, Director
Disclosure Division

FILER INFORMATION

Name: Betty S. Ward Cooper
Address: 101 Salem Dr., Monroe, LA 71202-3733
Office/Position: Monroe City School Board / District 5 / Ouachita
Dates of Service: 2014, 2017-2019
Number of Disclosures and/or Amendments Filed with Agency: 6

REPORT INFORMATION

Name of Report: Tier 2 Annual Personal Financial Disclosure covering calendar year 2018 - Amendment
Report ID: PFD19006892
Original Due Date: 5/15/2019
Initial PFD Filed on: 5/16/2019
NOD-amend Received: 1/27/2020 - Signed by: Betty Cooper
Amendment/Answer Due Date based on NOD: 2/5/2020
Amendment/Answer Filed: 7/8/2020

LATE FEE INFORMATION

Amount of Late Fee: \$2500
Days late from receipt of NOD: 154
Total days late from initial due date: 420
Late Fee Order Received: 9/21/2020
Payment/Waiver Request Due Date: 10/12/2020
Waiver Request Received: 9/25/2020

COMMENTS: Betty Ward-Cooper is requesting a Waiver for failing to file her 2018 Amendment timely. Mrs. Cooper stated she's a retired teacher, that wanted serve her community. She's committed to helping the public school education foundation and has worked with the others to increase the academic achievement for the school district. In her commitment to do her job well, she got overwhelmed and confused with some of our documents. Mrs. Cooper said "life got ahead of paperwork", but it was an honest mistake. She's filed all other PFD's timely and has been compliant each year; this being the only exception. She did not realize she submitted the wrong Tier Level; She serves on multiple boards, and was provided a 2.1 Tier at the board meetings, so she submitted to the BOE, not realizing she needed a Tier 2. She stated that all of the information reported was correct; it was just on the wrong form. Mrs. Cooper stated after a rigorous 2018 campaign, she was "reeling". The learning curve for the position has been high; with many new things to learn—orientation to the new board position, attending board meetings, orientation to the new campaign finance filing systems, distinguishing the many reports, attending many meetings and conferences (professional development), communicating with all the parents, students, teachers, community leaders, and constituents. During the time when the Amend Notice was issued, Mrs. Cooper stated the first few months of the 2020 were extremely busy. In January 2020, she was sworn in as board president; she was preparing an agenda for the first board meeting, she was visiting schools as they reconvened after the New Year's break, and then Covid-19 hit mid-March 2020. Mrs. Cooper stated, that this process has certainly been time consuming adventure, but it's for the good of the children, their families, and the community, so it's worth it. She humbly asks the Ethics Board to waive the \$2500 assessment. This is Mrs. Coopers' first PFD Late Fee Assessment.

OTHER LATE FEE INFORMATION

Disclosure Statements:

- Other Outstanding Statements: No
- Other Outstanding Late Fees: No
- Prior Late Fees: No
- Reassessed Late Fees: No

Campaign Finance:

- Outstanding Late Fees: Waiver Request \$480;
\$360, \$120; Pmt \$220
- Prior Late Fees: No

September 25, 2020

Ethics Adjudicatory Board
Louisiana Board of Ethics
P. O. Box 4368
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Ladies and Gentlemen:

APPEALLING THE 2018 LATE FEE ASSESSMENT

I am humbly appealing the 2018 late fee assessment, totaling \$2500. I am a retired teacher, continuing to give back by serving on the School Board of Monroe City Schools of Ouachita Parish. I have a focused desire, with passion and commitment to help lay the public school education foundation for all our children. As I work with the other school board members, I am striving to increase significantly the academic achievement of these precious gems, our children. With this kind of commitment to do my job well, life happened, and I got overwhelmed and confused on some things.

Life got ahead of paperwork—this happens; it was an honest mistake. This was my first time getting assessed a late fee; as everything else has been filed timely and is compliant; this was the only exception. I filed my annual report on time. Unknowing to me, I did not realize I submitted the wrong Tier Form; may be it is because I serve on multiple boards. I was provided a 2.1 Tier Form, and that was the Form I filled out. All of the information reported, was correct; it was just on the wrong form.

Further, to help you better understand my situation, I feel you need to know this. After a rigorous 2018 campaign, I was elected in December 2018; then, I was sworn in the following January 2019. I have been reeling (all good but just time consuming) ever since my campaign, until now, getting the job done with as much zeal as I can possibly muster up. As you can imagine, the learning curve was high; with many things to get use to—orientation to the new board position, attending board meetings, orientation to the new campaign finance filing systems, distinguishing the many reports, attending many meetings and conferences (professional development), communicating with all the stakeholders (constituents, parents, students, teachers, community leaders, constituents, etc. Whew! You get the picture.

I received a notice of the delinquency to amend from Tammy Frazier on January 27, 2020. The previous paragraph gives you an idea of some of things going that led up to the first two months, January and February, hat was part of the backdrop that caused me to miss the filing deadline; including--sworn in January 2020 as board president; preparing agenda for first board meeting, visiting schools as they reconvene after the New Year, etc. As you know for our State, Covid-19 was at its heightened level around the middle of March 2020.

This has certainly been a fast and furious, time consuming adventure. For the good I can do for our children, their families, and their community (even our world), it's worth the plight I have encountered.

Very truly yours,

Betty Ward-Cooper

Betty Ward-Cooper
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ETHICS BOARD REC'D
JAN 11 '21 PM 5:01